



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SCHOPENHAUER'S CRITICISM OF KANT'S THEORY OF ETHICS.

ONE may well doubt the fatal result of Schopenhauer's apparently crushing attack upon Kant's ethical method, and the permanent significance of his own restatement of the moral problem; but the insistent originality of his procedure leaves a lasting impression upon the reader, and the penetrating keenness of his criticism compels serious attention. Schopenhauer is dogmatic in his assertions, intolerant, unfair, and rarely consistent; but he is never trite. Of the many and varied criticisms called forth by Kant's theory of ethics, not one represents a method of attack as startlingly heterodox, from the Critical point of view, or as likely to arouse original thought, as the second of Schopenhauer's two prize-essays, entitled *Die Grundlage der Moral*.¹ Whether his conclusions are accepted or rejected, it must in any case surely be admitted that a proper understanding of his criticisms of Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* and second *Kritik* is indispensable to any student who would appreciate the real implications of the Critical method.

By both Kant and Schopenhauer the significance of epistemology and metaphysics alike is estimated with a view to the analysis and solution of the problem of morals, which for both of them is the problem *par excellence* of all philosophy. As Oscar Damm well puts it, the center of gravity of Schopenhauer's entire system

¹Published in *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*, 1840. The page-references to Schopenhauer's works in this article follow E. Grisebach's complete edition (Leipzig, Reclam, 6 volumes). Haldane and Kemp's translation of *The World as Will and Idea* (London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., third edition, 1896, 3 volumes) and A. B. Bullock's translation of *The Basis of Morality* (London, S. Sonnenschein & Co., 1903) have been used for the quotations. In quoting from Kant's ethical works, the writer has availed himself of T. K. Abbott's translation (*Kant's Theory of Ethics*, London, Longmans, Green, & Co., second edition, 1883), which also contains, in brackets, the pagination of Rosenkranz and Schubert's edition. For the sake of convenience Grisebach's edition has been referred to as G; Haldane and Kemp's translation, as HK.; Bullock's translation, as B.; Abbott's translation, as A. Other references are self-explanatory.

is to be found in his ethics.¹ The illusionism to which his theory of knowledge inevitably leads; his voluntaristic metaphysics, which is the philosophical explanation of his pessimistic view of experience; the æsthetic quietism bound up with his doctrine of the Platonic Ideas—are all as it were prolegomena to the solution of the problem of human conduct and the philosophical explanation of the true basis of morality.

Moral predigen ist leicht, Moral begründen, schwer—this motto of Schopenhauer's prize-essay suggests at the very start his method of attack. Between the fundamental principle, the $\delta\acute{o}\tau\iota$, $\tau\iota$ and the basis, the $\delta\iota\acute{o}\tau\iota$ of ethics, there is a radical distinction.² Schopenhauer finds the defect of all previous ethics in its failure to recognize this radical distinction, and its consequent neglect of the second problem. Among men at large there has been at no time any real quarrel as to what actions are to be considered 'good,' and what 'bad.' Schopenhauer finds Kant's Categorical Imperative itself to be only a paraphrase of the Golden Rule, of which his own maxim, *Neminem laede, immo omnes, quantum potes, juva*, is but the more adequately formulated statement.³ The disputes between moralists about their fundamental principles, Schopenhauer thinks, can all be traced to neglect of, or disagreement concerning, the problem of the basis of ethics. A science of ethics can never stop with the 'what,' with describing the sort of actions called moral; it must go further, and, by psychological investigation of the motives actuating human conduct, determine the 'why' of the epithet 'moral.' Schopenhauer's prize-essay undertakes to answer the question set by the Danish Royal Society of Science: "*Is the fountain and basis of Morals to be sought for in an idea of morality which lies directly in the consciousness (or conscience), and in the analysis of the other leading ethical conceptions which arise from it? Or is it to be found in some other source of knowledge?*"⁴ The metaphysical

¹*Schopenhauers Ethik im Verhältnis zu seiner Erkenntnislehre und Metaphysik.* Annaberg, 1898, p. 39. Cf. G., III, p. 642; B., p. 258: "For if life . . . have a meaning, then the supreme goal to which it points is undoubtedly ethical."

²Cf. G., III, p. 517; B., p. 53.

³G., III, p. 539; B., p. 87.

⁴G., III, p. 486; B., p. 2

problem as to the ultimate meaning of morals is only touched upon here, and that in a brief Appendix. But the assertion and denial of the Will, and the metaphysical implications of self-renunciation, form the theme of the last book of *The World as Will and Idea*, which Schopenhauer himself considers to be the most serious part of his system.¹

The object of this study is, first, to state as briefly and concisely as seems expedient Schopenhauer's own account and criticism of Kant's theory of ethics; secondly, to outline Schopenhauer's statement of the fundamental principle and the basis of morals, indicating also the significance of the ethics of sympathy with regard to the basal spirit of his whole philosophy; thirdly, to attempt something by way of criticism of what appears to be the principal source of confusion in both Kant's and Schopenhauer's notions of the real significance of morality for philosophy; and, in conclusion, to suggest a possible means of solving the problem of ethics in terms of concrete human experience.

I.

First of all, then, what is Kant's method of ethics? In his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* Kant attempts to find out and establish the supreme principle of morality. "This alone," Kant says, "constitutes a study complete in itself, and one which ought to be kept apart from every other moral investigation."² Kant's problem in the *Grundlegung* is ostensibly the same as that posited by the Danish Royal Society. His plan, however, is to construct a moral philosophy on the *a priori* basis of 'pure practical reason.' The principles of ethics, he asserts, cannot be based on experience, for an experience-grounded morality would lack that 'rational necessity' which he considers indispensable. What men *ought* to do, Kant says, can be determined by *a priori* reasoning—regardless of what men actually do, or can reasonably be expected to do. "Even though there might never yet have been a sincere friend, yet not a whit the less is pure sincerity in friendship required of every man, because, prior

¹G., I, p. 355; HK., I, p. 349.

²A., p. 7 [9].

to all experience, this duty is involved as duty in the idea of a reason determining the will by *a priori* principles."¹ And, again, Kant speaks of "a practical philosophy, where it is not the reasons of what *happens* that we have to ascertain, but the laws of what *ought to happen*, even although it never does."²

It is this initial position which Schopenhauer characterizes as Kant's ethical *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*. For, he cleverly asks: Who tells you that that 'ought' to take place, which in fact never does take place?³ Kant's 'moral law,' if it is to have any concrete significance, must derive its ultimate sanction from human experience. "*Moral* laws, apart from human institution, state ordinance, or religious doctrine, cannot rightly be assumed as existing without proof."⁴ 'Thou shalt not lie' is no *a priori* moral law, operating over and above experience; whatever its philosophical justification may be, its authority it derives from long centuries of actual human experience. And, as a matter of fact, a principle of law, of obligation, a 'thou shalt,' owes all its meaning and force to threatened punishment or promised reward. A 'thou shalt,' severed from its concomitant 'lest' or 'in order that,' is devoid of all significance. To Schopenhauer himself the inference is quite plain: "What *ought* to be done is therefore necessarily conditioned by punishment or reward; consequently, to use Kant's language, it is essentially and inevitably *hypothetical*, and never, as he maintains, *categorical*."⁵ All oughtness is hypothetical; an 'absolute obligation' is a *contradictio in adjecto*. If Kant does employ a 'thou shalt' in his ethics, then he must point to the ancestry of his principle and justify its use in his method; but he has no right to assume it at all; far less, to assume it as absolutely necessary and categorically imperative.

It should be carefully noted that, from Schopenhauer's point of view, Kant cannot, with justice to his starting point and method, posit the moral law and its categorical imperatives as experiential data. If the categorical imperative were an im-

¹A., pp. 24-25 [30].

²A., p. 45 [54].

³G., III, p. 500; B., p. 28.

⁴G., III, p. 501; B., p. 30.

⁵G., III, p. 503; B., pp. 32-33.

mediate fact of human consciousness, its basis would be anthropological, psychological, empirical—hence, utterly worthless to a moral philosopher who, like Kant, has forsworn experience. Kant has sternly assumed an *a priori* point of view, and it is this point of view, this method itself, which is the very object of Schopenhauer's attack.

Nevertheless, Kant asserts: "The moral law is given as a fact of pure reason of which we are *a priori* conscious."¹ But reason, Schopenhauer insists, is nothing else than the capacity for abstract ideas, the conceptual faculty, as distinguished from the understanding, which is the direct consciousness of the law of causality. The epithets 'reasonable,' 'rational,' have at all times, he says, been applied to conduct guided by thoughts and conceptions, rather than by intuitive impressions and inclinations. Now, this does not necessarily mean virtuous, just, noble conduct, conduct directed by integrity and by love for one's fellows. The latter, whatever its special characteristics may be, depends upon the difference in motivation; rational conduct, however, varies in accordance with the variation of theoretical principles. To identify 'rational' with 'good' conduct, as Kant does, is to beg the whole question at the very start.² Although, in the *Dialectic of Pure Reason*, Kant had repudiated the rational psychology, yet Schopenhauer argues that, in propounding his views of practical reason and its sundry imperatives, Kant was still under the influence of the after-effects of the old Substance doctrine, with its *anima rationalis*, *æternæ veritates*, and all the other artifacts of rationalist fantasy. Kant starts from the notion of the moral law, and attempts to deduce from it all he needs. He has scorned all empirical basis for his law, and all that is left him is the abstract form of 'lawfulness.' This, however, in Kant's opinion, implies unconditioned necessity and universal validity. What is right for me, is right for all rational beings. Hence, the categorical imperative: "Act as if the maxim of thy law were to become by thy will an universal law of nature." This, then, is Kant's so-called deduction of the categorical imperative, stated

¹A., p. 136 [163].

²Cf. G., III, pp. 528 ff; B., pp. 70 ff.

in the briefest possible way. 'Rationality' involves 'lawfulness' and 'universal validity': hence the demands of duty are *a priori* binding for all rational beings. Thus, therefore, is the whole groundwork of Kant's ethical structure built on the basis of the mutual implications of abstract *a priori* conceptions, without any regard to actual human experience.

But what is the real meaning of this leading principle of Kant's ethics: "Act only in accordance with that precept which you can also wish should be a general law for all rational beings"? This is plainly no real *principle* at all; it is only a sort of finger-post. The *Zahlmeister* that holds the cash of reality here, Schopenhauer says, is none other than Egoism.¹ And here we enter upon his next charge against the Kantian ethics. It is nothing but an abstract reformulation of the old theological morality; and, like the former, it is, at bottom, egoistic.

My action is labelled right or wrong, Kant says, according as I can will the maxim of my act to be an universal law or not. But why do I will one way or the other? What is the real spring of action in either case? Schopenhauer answers readily: "Egoism, which is the nearest, ever ready, original, and living standard of all volition and which has at any rate the *jus primi occupantis* before every moral principle."² To the superficial reader of Kant's ethics, this assertion may appear absurd. Why, he would say, Kant sets out at the very start to establish morality distinctly on the basis of *disinterested* adherence to the demands of duty, to the rationally necessitated course of an autonomous will. What is Kant's morality but a morality of the austere pursuit of virtue, *fiat justitia pereat mundus*? Yes, Schopenhauer answers, but does not Kant also tell you that, while you, as a rational moral being, must pursue virtue with no eye to the consequences of your conduct, *nevertheless* in the rational order of things virtue *does* involve happiness, and vice the opposite? It is the inevitableness of this coincidence, which apparently necessitates Kant's three ethical postulates: Transcendental Freedom, to make responsibility of the moral agent rationally possible, and thus jus-

¹G., III, p. 536; B., p. 82.

²G., III, p. 536; B., p. 83.

tify rewards and punishments; an Almighty, All-wise, and Eternal God, to adjust all ethical accounts in accordance with the rational necessity of the moral order; and Immortality of the Soul, to afford scope for the ethical adjustment of such individual accounts as are left unbalanced at man's death. Here, then, we see, in the first place, the real origin of Kant's austere ethics of duty. The theological doctrines of God, Freedom, and Immortality, are not corollaries following from the moral law; rather are they seen to be its real source and support. And the austere follower of the categorical imperative finds his moral resolution considerably strengthened when the realization of his purely rational nature reveals to him the fact that virtue, followed for virtue's sake and with no regard to consequences, does nevertheless, in the divine order of things, involve happiness. The apparently disinterested 'respect' (*Achtung*) for the moral law is thus seen to be in actuality the prudent 'obedience' (*Gehorsam*) to it for self-regarding considerations. *Dies ist "des Pudels Kern."*¹

Kant himself virtually says: Lying is wrong because I could not will a general law to establish lying, inasmuch as people would no longer believe me, or else would pay me back in the same coin.² Be just, therefore, else injustice will be heaped upon your own head; be kind, for if all are unkind, you shall fare ill yourself. This is 'reasonable' virtuous conduct; it pays in the long run. Honesty is the best policy. Thus, whether Schopenhauer's admittedly one-sided interpretation be accepted or not, whether the factor which makes me will or not will a certain maxim to become an universal law, be egoism or what not, in any case one thing is certain: Schopenhauer has demonstrated Kant's failure in his chief aim. The so-called Categorical Imperative turns out to be in reality hypothetical, and points behind and ahead to other considerations, be they what they may.

Objecting to Kant's entire way of attacking the problem of morals, Schopenhauer emphatically declares: "I say, in contradiction to Kant, that the student of Ethics . . . must content himself with explaining and interpreting that which is given, in

¹G., III, p. 516; B., p. 52. Cf. Goethe's *Faust*, Part I, *Studierzimmer*.

²Cf. A., p. 40 [49].

other words, that which really is, or takes place. . . . Ethics has to do with actual human conduct, and not with the *a priori* building of card houses, a performance which yields results that no man would ever turn to in the stern stress and battle of life."¹

II.

After having disproved to his own satisfaction the validity of Kant's basis of morality, Schopenhauer presents his own theory. What is needed, he says, is a basis of morality that will apply to living humanity, and not to mere 'rational beings.' The task of ethics, he insists, is directly to analyze human conduct in its various aspects, in order to find out, if possible, the *διότι* of the sort of conduct recognized by mankind as virtuous and praiseworthy.

What are the antimoral incentives of human conduct? Where must we look for the springs of 'bad' actions? Schopenhauer's psychological analysis points to two such springs: Egoism (*Egoismus*) and Malice (*Bosheit*). The 'maxim' of egoistic conduct is: *Neminem juva, immo omnes, si forte conducit, laede*. It is incontestably the commonest spring of human action. Malice follows the standard: *Neminem juva, immo omnes, quantum potes, laede*. "From *egoism* we should probably derive greed, gluttony, lust, selfishness, avarice, covetousness, injustice, hardness of heart, pride, arrogance, etc.; while to *spitefulness* (*Gehässigkeit*) might be ascribed disaffection, envy, ill-will, malice, pleasure in seeing others suffer, prying curiosity, slander, insolence, petulance, hatred, anger, treachery, fraud, thirst for revenge, cruelty, etc."² This catalogue of vices, as Kuno Fischer aptly remarks, recalls Dante's *Inferno* and the Pandemonium of Milton.³

Another mighty motive-power is needed to counteract these inbred tendencies of the natural man, and to inaugurate a line of conduct diametrically opposite. Such a motive, aiming at the betterment of the lot of others, regardless of selfish considerations, must be actuated from within, and from within only. All

¹G., III, pp. 500, 523-524; B., pp. 28, 63.

²G., III, p. 582; B., pp. 157-158.

³Arthur Schopenhauer (*Gesch. d. neuern Phil.*, Vol. VIII). Heidelberg, 1893, p. 391.

external factors,—fear, religious promises and threats, laws, feelings of self-respect and human dignity, Kingdoms of Ends, and what not,—Schopenhauer thinks, are but empty claptrap, when set over against the egoism that sways man's will; for at bottom they are one and all allies of selfishness, and not enemies. The only real mark of acts truly moral is the absence of all egoistic considerations; such acts are actuated by interest in one's fellow-beings, by pity for the suffering, sympathy with the cast-down, lovingkindness and justice towards all. If others' weal and woe affect my entire being so as to dominate my volition and motivate my deeds, then it is that Compassion (*Mitleid*) enters, "the direct participation, independent of all ulterior considerations, in the sufferings of another, leading to sympathetic assistance in the effort to prevent or remove them."¹ "There are," Schopenhauer says, "only *three* fundamental springs of human conduct, and all possible motives arise from one or other of these: They are (1) Egoism, which desires the weal of the self, and is limitless; (2) Malice, which desires the woe of others, and may develop to the utmost cruelty; (3) Compassion, which desires the weal of others, and may rise to nobleness and magnanimity. Every human act is referable to one of these springs, although two of them may work together."² Malice is immoral altogether. Egoism is immoral, if it aims at harming others; or else non-moral, if one's action, though actuated by self-regarding considerations, concerns no one else. Sympathy alone is moral, aiming as it does at the cessation of the woe of others and the furtherance of their weal, irrespective of any selfish purposes.

Sympathy may be either negative or positive, thus giving rise to the two cardinal virtues, from which all others may be deduced, namely, Justice and Lovingkindness. The former follows the first part of the leading moral principle: *Neminem laede*, Do harm to no one. The just "respect the rights of every man, and abstain from all encroachment on them; they keep themselves free from self-reproach, by refusing to be the cause of others' trouble; they do not shift on to shoulders not their own, by

¹G., III, p. 589; B., p. 170.

²G., III, p. 591; B., pp. 171-172.

force or by trickery, the burdens and sorrows of life, which circumstances bring to everyone; they prefer to bear themselves the portions allotted to them, so as not to double those of their neighbours."¹ Injustice and wrong consist in working harm on another, or allowing by our conduct that such harm be done, in failure to keep one's explicit or implicit obligations and agreements. It is doubly hideous in treachery, where the source of trusted help turns into a spring of venomous malice. In lovingkindness, however, the appeal is to all mankind; and it is the sympathetic, moral man, who hears the cry of distress and responds to it. In cases like that of the relations of parents and children, there is involved no 'contract,' hence no obligation, strictly speaking. But, owing to the peculiar helplessness of the young off-spring, and the circumstances of the case, the claim is here made especially on the parent, and this also accounts for filial gratitude. Such 'duties' lie on the borderland between justice and lovingkindness proper.

In order to clinch his argument that sympathy is the only truly moral incentive, Schopenhauer appeals to concrete human experience for proof. And he finds no lack of confirmation. With keen sarcasm he points the meaninglessness of other ethical criteria when applied to concrete cases of conduct.² In great moral conflicts, in the storm and stress of real life, it is the potent power of sympathy that saves us; the absence of it, that drags us down. Unselfish compassion, pity, and lovingkindness for all beings, coupled with true integrity of conduct—these are the springs actuating the sort of conduct which has always been recognized as noble and praiseworthy by all those not "completely chloroformed by the *foetor Judaicus*."³ The Hindu Vedas, Panca-Tantra, and all Asiatic thought, are permeated with this spirit of universal compassion; Pausanius, Stobaeus, and Lucian show indications of it; Lessing and Jean Jacques are imbued with its power.⁴

¹G., III, pp. 595-596; B., p. 179.

²Cf. G., III, pp. 612-614; B., pp. 206-208.

³G., III, p. 622; B., p. 221.

⁴Cf. G., III, pp. 627 ff.; B., pp. 230 ff. Johannes Volkelt, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, Stuttgart, 1900, p. 300, refers to the Schopenhauerian tendencies, in this respect, of Wagner, Tolstoi, and Jean Paul.

Sympathy is thus seen to be the psychological basis of all morality. But, Schopenhauer says, there is yet another problem awaiting solution. "The principle, which we discovered to be the final explanation of Ethics, now in turn itself requires explaining."¹ What is the metaphysical basis of sympathy itself? Wherein does the *Weltanschauung* of the egoist differ from that of the compassionate man? An empirical study of the matter discloses to Schopenhauer one fundamental difference: the compassionate man "*draws less distinction between himself and others than is usually done.*"² The egoist, the malicious man, looks at all the world from the point of view of his own self-centered individuality; an impassable gulf separates him from his neighbor. *Pereat mundus, dum ego salvus sim*, is his motto. The man of sympathy, on the contrary, has more or less completely effaced the distinction between his own interests and those of others; a deepening consciousness of oneness with the rest of mankind and of communion with all existence dominates his life. Of these two, which is the one laboring under a delusion—the egoist or the compassionate man?³ When this question has been satisfactorily answered, in terms of a consistent metaphysics, then the last and deepest problem of ethics shall have found an adequate solution.

The answer, in terms of Schopenhauer's own phenomenalist epistemology and metaphysical voluntarism, can well be anticipated. No doubt, from the point of view of him for whom the causally connected order of space-time multiplicity exhausts all reality, egoism seems the normal, healthy, 'right' mode of conduct. But the man of clearer, deeper vision, the artist, the philosopher, the ethical saint, pierces through the veil of *Mâyâ*, and sees beneath the multiplicity of this our world of shadow-shape existence the underlying unity that is the very kernel of reality. "The web of plurality, woven in the loom of Time and Space, is not the Thing in itself, but only its *appearance-form*. . . . That which is objectivated in the countless phenomena of this world of the senses cannot but be a unity, a single indivisible

¹G., III, p. 645; B., p. 264.

²G., III, p. 646; B., p. 266.

³G., III, p. 647; B., p. 267.

entity, manifested in each and all of them.”¹ When we finally come to recognize the illusoriness of the distinction between the ego and the non-ego, we experience reality as it is in its essence. This, then, is what Schopenhauer regards as the metaphysical foundation of ethics: “The sense which identifies the *ego* with the *non-ego*, so that the individual directly recognizes in *another* his own self, his true and very being.”² This higher metaphysical knowledge becomes immediately present to the ethical saint, to the ascetic who renounces the will-to-live in himself, and recognizes completely the mystic truth of the Sanskrit *tat twam asi*: “This thou art.” This last conclusion, to which both ethics and metaphysics lead, is not capable of being stated in terms of exact philosophical principles; the philosopher himself can only catch a vague glimmer of what the hermit-saint directly experiences. “Every purely beneficent act, all help entirely and genuinely unselfish, being, as such, exclusively inspired by another’s distress, is, in fact, if we probe the matter to the bottom, a dark enigma, a piece of mysticism put into practice; inasmuch as it springs out of, and finds its only true explanation in, the same higher knowledge that constitutes the essence of whatever is mystical.”³ But the way in which the compassionate conduct, universally recognized as moral, and the epistemological illusionism which leads Schopenhauer to his doctrine of self-renunciation, inevitably point to and involve each other, shows clearly, Schopenhauer thinks, the correctness of his analysis of human conduct as well as the truth of his interpretation of the nature of reality. Thus do his ethics and his theoretical philosophy mutually vindicate each other.

III.

Let us keep in mind the chief points in Schopenhauer’s criticism of Kant’s theory of morals and turn our attention to the philosophical implications and practical significance of the ethics of sympathy and self-obliteration which Schopenhauer advances as the only true solution of the moral problem.

¹G., III, p. 648; B., p. 269.

²G., III, p. 651; B., p. 274.

³G., III, p. 653; B., p. 278.

The constant demand for keeping to experience in the course of ethical investigation, which characterizes Schopenhauer's procedure in *The Basis of Morality*, is in itself a welcome sign. He rightly insists that it is impossible for Kant's moral laws and imperatives to have any meaning at all, unless connected in some way with experience; on the other hand, that it is impossible for them to have the least connection with experience, with actual human consciousness, without contradicting Kant's own standpoint and method. Kant's first and foremost error consists in the way he mapped out his campaign. And Schopenhauer, criticizing as he is Kant's fundamental point of view, is concerned first and foremost with his solution of the problem set in the *Grundlegung*: How can a moral philosophy be established on a purely *a priori* basis? The significant results which Kant does reach in his theory of morals by contradicting himself, only strengthen the argument against his own method. Schopenhauer is not intent on showing that no good can come out of Kant's ethics of obligation. His task is rather to show that Kant's attempted *a priori* basis of morality is inadequate and false.

The dialectical conclusions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, having made impossible any phenomenal basis upon which 'practical principles' could be established, and having ruled out from experience all that endows man's æsthetic, ethical, and religious ideas and ideals with concrete significance, necessitated an over-experiential, an *a priori* formulation of the ethical problem, and an abstract method for its solution. The world of phenomena, which for Kant exhausts experience, is a material world of space and time, for which an immaterial soul is an empty phantom; a world of determinism and strict necessity, which allows of no 'freedom' to interfere with the inevitable sequence in the causal series, and of no absolute, unconditioned Being, no God conceived as its First Cause over and above experience. Kant's theoretical philosophy handed the entire world of phenomena over to the mechanical categories, and thus left the deepest concerns of man outside of the pale of experience, declaring Reality, the *Ding-an-sich*, to be at best but a problematical notion, essentially un-

knowable. But God, Freedom, and Immortality, thus banished from the phenomenal order, did not lose their meaning for Kant. Rather did they suggest and indicate the way for an attempt to restate the problem of ethics from a non-empirical point of view, —to seek the realm of morality in some ideal kingdom of ends, in the noumenal nature of rational beings. And, in this abstract sphere of ethical discussion, Kant found the concepts of 'rationality,' 'lawfulness,' 'duty,' and the practical postulates, God, Freedom, and Immortality, to involve each other necessarily. On the basis of this mutual implication of abstract concepts, Kant constructed his entire system of rational obligation of autonomous wills.

To a man so human and so much alive to the frailties of man as Schopenhauer, Kant's theory of morals seemed to have cut loose from reality altogether. "The structure floats in the air," he says, "like a web of the subtlest conceptions devoid of all contents; it is based on nothing, and can therefore support nothing and move nothing."¹ In his plea for an attempt at an empirical investigation of actual human nature as a propædæutic to the solution of the problem of human conduct and the statement of ethics in terms of direct experience, Schopenhauer stands for what is more and more becoming the method of recent significant ethical investigation. Ethics may not end with man, but it must start with a study of conduct from a human point of view, and not from the heights of any imagined or abstractly reasoned-out Deity. Morality can never be consistently based upon any theology or any supernatural religion. Rather do these latter find their origin and whatever real significance they may have in terms of the moral development and the social experience of their advocates and adherents. The moral theorist must first become intimate with what man is, before presuming to intimate what man ought to be. The hierarchy of ethical values can rise above the brute in man and reach the plane of the divine only by resting upon the solid rock of actual human nature.

But what manner of experience is that upon which Schopenhauer prides himself to have based his theory of morals? In his

¹G., III, p. 524; B., p. 64

interpretation of the differences in human character, of the warring forces that tend to disrupt the nature of each individual, and, on the other hand, of the one indivisible unity wherein all differences are effaced and all conflicts quieted—is he analyzing the concrete conduct of man? Does Kant's critic himself actually cleave to experience, as he professes to do? Schopenhauer approaches the problem of the basis of morality with an epistemology and metaphysics completely formulated twenty years previously. The thing-in-itself, which for the writer of the *Critique of Pure Reason* remained a *Weissnichts*, is for Schopenhauer no enigma, but rather the most direct and certain of all certainties. He finds the kernel of reality in that striving, grasping, eternally craving *Trieb*, which characterizes the flux of all existence, and which he calls 'Will,' after its most highly developed manifestation in human consciousness.¹ The never-satisfied character of the Will is at the root of all the wretchedness of existence; struggling humanity is the ever-thirsty Tantalus; aspiring manhood is the slave of its own desires, and all its illusory pleasures are but the passing cessation of pain. The hour of man's intensest happiness is but the natal hour of future pain and sorrow, the offspring of ceaseless desire. Deluded by the multiplicity of the veil of *Mâyâ*, the average man pushes on to the achievement of his own purposes, not realizing the empty vanity of his endeavor. The elect souls, however, who pierce through the veil of *Mâyâ*, and, in recognizing the kernel of their own nature, also realize the fatuity of individual striving, renounce all selfish conduct, and by denying the will-to-live in themselves achieve the truly moral excellence and the higher knowledge of the Real.²

But Schopenhauer himself admits that this metaphysical experience in which the essence of all sympathetic, all truly moral conduct, lies, is an immediate matter which only they can understand who have denied "this our world . . . with all its stars and milky ways."³ He begins by professing to study actual human

¹G., I, pp. 163ff; II, p. 229; HK., I, pp. 143ff; II, p. 407.

²G., II, pp. 707 ff; HK., III, p. 417. Cf. Volkelt, *op. cit.* p. 297: "Die Liebe ist also unmittelbares Gefühl der metaphysischen Einheit aller Menschen."

³G., I, p. 527; HK., I, p. 532. Cf. Jodl, *Geschichte der Ethik in der neueren Philosophie*, Vol. II (Stuttgart, 1889), p. 236.

conduct, but he finds distinctly moral conduct to be capable of real explanation only by reference to a mystical realm of self-renunciation, as little capable of being described in terms of concrete experience as Kant's own noumenal kingdom of ends. The distinction which Schopenhauer himself draws between his own ethics and the Kantian—namely, that his own ethics concerns actual experience, whereas the Kantian seeks an abstract *a priori* basis—is thus seen, on closer examination, to demand serious qualifications.

As a matter of fact, both Kant and Schopenhauer tend to regard the true sphere of morals as foreign to the everyday conduct of man. Kant, scorning any empirical basis, rejects all morality based on feelings and inclinations, and seeks his ethical realm in a supersensuous Kingdom of Ends, in the noumenal character of rational beings. This is the ground of his distinction between the empirical and the intelligible character of man. By virtue of the former man is tied down to the necessity of the world of phenomena; by virtue of the latter he is autonomous, a free member of the moral order. Schopenhauer's admiration for this "greatest of all the achievements of human sagacity,"¹ becomes easy to understand when one sees the way in which he interprets Kant's doctrine with reference to his own theory. The empirical character of man is dominated by the immutable necessity of motivation, and his various acts are necessarily determined by the character of his own being. *Operari sequitur esse*. The *esse*, however, is beyond the sphere of the causally connected multiplicity of phenomena; as an intelligible character, man is metaphysically free.²

There are many problems arising from this shifting of freedom and responsibility from the 'empirical' to the 'intelligible' character, from the 'operari' to the 'esse.' The significance of Schopenhauer's prize-essay *Ueber die Freiheit des Willens*³ in its relation to Kant's doctrine of Freedom cannot be justly estimated

¹G., III, pp. 557-558; B., p. 118.

²Cf. G., I, p. 518; HK., I, p. 523: "Necessity is the kingdom of nature; freedom is the kingdom of grace." Cf. Volkelt, *op. cit.*, pp. 290 ff.

³Published together with *Die Grundlage der Moral* in *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*, 1840.

until after an adequate examination of its philosophical implications.¹ Here the object is merely to indicate the way in which Schopenhauer adapts Kant's doctrines of freedom and of the empirical and the intelligible character to his own purposes, so as to justify his own sharp distinction between the will-impelled egoistic conduct, and the self-renunciation of the ethical hero free from the bonds of will. Schopenhauer's moral genius, like Kant's, has transcended the limits of phenomena. Only Kant believes he has found morality in the austere adherence to the demands of the moral law; Schopenhauer, in the self-denying love characterizing all truly sympathetic conduct. This, then, is the real difference between Kant's conception of morality and Schopenhauer's. Kant's is the ethics of imperative reason; Schopenhauer's, the ethics of compassionate feeling.² Each, in its own way, illustrates tendencies normally present in human nature. Kant's morality is the morality of the Hebraic spirit which deified law; Schopenhauer's, the morality of oriental meditation, the ethics of Jesus of Nazareth.³

Now, morality concerns all of human nature, and any attempt to exhaust its significance by deifying any one of its aspects is doomed to failure. Schopenhauer readily sees the narrowness of Kant's conception of morality, and it is a sorry picture that he draws of Kant's moral hero: "If, by a strong effort of the imagination, we try to picture to ourselves a man, possessed, as it were, by a *dæmon*, in the form of an *absolute Ought*, that speaks

¹The writer hopes to attempt some such examination in a separate article.

²*Cf.* Volkelt, *op. cit.*; p. 307: "Fasse ich alles zusammen, so kann ich Schopenhauers Moralphilosophie als eine *metaphysisch gegründete einseitige Gefühlsethik* bezeichnen. Die einzige Quelle des moralischen Handelns liegt in dem irrationalen Gefühle des Mitleids."

³"That *παντα κατα λιαν* of the Old Testament is really foreign to true Christianity; for in the New Testament the world is always spoken of as something to which one does not belong, which one does not love, nay, whose lord is the devil. . . . There is nothing from which one has to distinguish the kernel so carefully from the shell as in Christianity. Just because I prize this kernel highly I sometimes treat the shell with little ceremony; it is, however, thicker than is generally supposed." G., II, pp. 735, 736; HK., III, p. 447. *Cf.* G., II, p. 745 ff; HK., III, p. 457 ff. Paulsen maintains a similar view of the ethics of primitive Christianity (*Cf.* his *System der Ethik*, Berlin, 1891, pp. 48 ff; Engl. tr. by Professor Frank Thilly, New York, 1903, pp. 65 ff). *Cf.* also Volkelt, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

only in Categorical Imperatives, and, confronting his wishes and inclinations, claims to be the perpetual controller of his actions; in this figure we see no true portrait of human nature, or of our inner life; what we *do* discern is an artificial substitute for theological Morals, to which it stands in the same relation as a wooden leg to a living one."¹ But, one may ask, what are the practical implications of Schopenhauer's own pessimistic *Weltanschauung*, and of the ethics of sympathy and self-obliteration which he bases upon it? Whither does Schopenhauer's own morality lead? What are its chances of realization, and what its ultimate goal? A careful consideration of these questions would reveal the narrowness of Schopenhauer's own point of view, and his radical misconception of human nature, which is evident in his inadequate statement of the moral problem.

On Schopenhauer's own basis, epistemological and metaphysical, egoism is the normal, healthy mode of conduct. What Schopenhauer calls the egoistic 'illusion' allows, none the less, of the will's manifesting itself in him, and, through his species, rising to ever higher planes of objectification. Man is what he is because of his making nature fight his battles; or, perhaps better, because of his fighting the battles of nature, for this is what Schopenhauer calls being the slave of the tyrant Will. If, however, by understanding the true nature of the World-Reality, man could hasten by his own endeavor the progress of evolution, then such an 'enslavement' would be an undoubted desideratum. Yes, Schopenhauer says, if the game were worth the candle! This is, then, the crucial point in the entire discussion. If there were a balance of weal, to compensate the effort expended, who would not slave? Alas, says Schopenhauer, but "life is a business which does not cover its expenses."² The only basis of weal, of real happiness, is the calm of a quieted spirit. Desire is the very essence of Will, and it is essentially painful.³ Amend the Will we cannot, for it is our very essence; but we can end it.⁴ The ethical hero realizes the vanity of it all, and turns his back upon

¹G., III, p. 549; B., pp. 103-104.

²G., II, p. 280; HK., II, p. 461.

³Cf. G., II, pp. 676 ff.; HK. III, pp. 384 ff.

⁴Cf. W. Wallace, *Life of Arthur Schopenhauer*, London, 1890, p. 137.

the onrushing flux. And that not by suicide; for suicide only does away with the phenomenal element in man's being, it does not touch in the slightest the kernel of reality in him, that tyrant Will which is the source and cause of all his wretchedness. No, by curbing the will-to-live in himself, man ceases playing into the hands of the grasping demon within him, and sinks into the desireless, lustless calm of Nirvana.

But what does all this mean for the fate of morality itself? The morality of sympathy, as has already been repeatedly observed, is but a step on the road to salvation; its real goal is self-effacement. Now, the goal of such an ethics, in plain words, is racial self-annihilation. And if morality has meaning only in terms of human experience, as Schopenhauer himself declares, then his own ethics aims at its own extinction, at a state of Being where no morality would, by the nature of the case, be possible. This is the logical result of Schopenhauer's moral ideal. Should all humanity adopt Kant's theory of morals, the world might become an icy prison of loveless Puritans. But at the altars of Schopenhauer's ethical ideal mankind can continue to worship for just one generation. Such a theory of morals, which would devitalize mankind of its assertive energy and of its normal tendencies and healthy appetites, is diseased in character.¹

In fact, the twist which Friedrich Nietzsche gave to Schopenhauer's moral theory, only illustrates its vulnerable character. Why, says Nietzsche, if the endless *Trieb* of the will-to-live has evolved man from the beast, and if egoism be the normal mode of conduct, who dare declare it immoral? Experience shows that the evolution of the race has been characterized by the survival of the fittest, not of the most compassionate. Sympathy is degeneration, hollow sentiment, the sign of a diseased age and civilization. *Neminem laede, immo omnes, quantum potes, juva!* Indeed, this is sun-heated nonsense, Nietzsche says. Do no harm to yourself, rather! Assert your own might, give play to the giant that is within you! Only by the unimpeded upward climb of pitiless aggressiveness can man advance to a higher

¹Cf. Volkelt, *op. cit.*, p. 299: "So fehlt seiner Moralphilosophie der Charakter des Förderns und Bauens; alles Bejahende und Schöpferische liegt ihr fern."

stratum of evolution and reach the plane of the *Ueberschensch*.¹ Thus we see how, upon the basis of Schopenhauer's inadequate epistemology and psychology, a narrowly pessimistic, and a narrowly optimistic view of the development of experience have found expression, respectively, in an ethics of racial self-annihilation and an ethics of blatant assertion of the 'blond beast' in man.

Schopenhauer is right in pleading for an appeal to human experience, and, as was indicated above, his criticism of Kant in this respect is, so far as it goes, quite justified. For no theory of morals can have any real significance if its basis is alien to concrete experience. A morality for which the joys and sorrows of mortal men and women have no real, essential meaning, is itself barren of any meaning for mortal men and women. Morality is no abstractly rational concern of phantom citizens in some noumenal Kingdom of Ends; it cannot borrow its sanction of authority from any transcendent Deity or any divinely inscribed Decalogue. An ethics of abstract sorites may do for a universe of bloodless artifacts; but an ethics which would show living man the springs of his own conduct, and set before him the concrete vision of his own dimly felt ideals,—such an ethics must necessarily find both its problem and its method in human experience. This is the proper sphere of the moral philosopher; here and here alone is the real basis of morality to be sought. *Heic Rhodus, heic salta!*² But Nietzsche's attack upon Schopenhauer's morality of self-effacement is also perfectly well justified. A morality whose logical result involves the self-annihilation of the human species can have as little meaning for living men and women as the morality which treats them as bloodless rational beings. In his ethics Kant errs in apparently refusing to read the open book of human experience; Schopenhauer, however, would fain close it and cast it aside in disgust. The moral philos-

¹Cf. in this connection Nietzsche's *Genealogie der Moral*, Third Essay: *Was bedeuten asketische Ideale* (Nietzsche's *Werke*, Leipzig, 1896, Vol. VII, pp. 397 ff.; English transl., New York, 1897, pp. 127 ff.); also, in the posthumously published *Will to Power*, Book II, Part II: *A Criticism of Morality*, esp. §§ 382 ff. (Engl transl., Edinburgh, 1909, pp. 303 ff.).

²G., III, p. 540; B., p. 88.

opher of the modern age must read the book of experience, and that only, but he must read it aright.

Constant insistence upon the necessity of taking account of 'experience,' however, is in danger of becoming meaningless, if it be not made plain what 'experience' must mean for modern ethics. If ethics is to achieve the status of a real science, it can do so only by vindicating the significance of its special point of view. It cannot borrow its categories wholesale from psychology or anthropology, without re-interpreting them with reference to its own problems. The moralist may say with Molière: "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve," but he can call his method his own only when he has realized the essential character of his problem, which distinguishes it from that of the anthropologist proper. And that essential character consists in what may be called the philosophical nature of all ethical questions. The mere collecting of facts about human conduct may yield an encyclopedia of interesting observations; but it can never yield a science of ethics. An interpretation of the facts of human conduct in accordance with valid ethical categories is possible only when the universal character of all morality is realized. In the everyday struggles and aspirations of prosaic men and women, the penetrating student of ethics should be able to perceive the ideal conception of the unactualized but none the less real ethical goal. Mere brute actuality is by no means the criterion of significance in a discipline as distinctly normative as ethics. Man's highest ideals are not the less true, nor their demands the less imperative, just because the everyday record of actual accomplishment falls short of the mark. *Ars longa, vita brevis*. Any adequate study of man's moral progress is sure to reveal an unmistakable striving towards an as yet unachieved ideal. The imperative moral *Trieb* in that direction is what the 'absolute ought' in Kant's ethics really means, when stripped of its formal garb. And here, it seems to me, Schopenhauer, while admittedly right in criticising Kant's altogether too abstract method, utterly fails to catch the real spirit of Kant's 'imperative' ethics. The appreciation of ethical values, which lifts man to an ever rising level of moral excellence, is not a slave's hope of para-

dise or fear of damnation. In the clash of conflicting motives the consciousness of moral obligation is the voice of man's rational nature, demanding the recognition of its intrinsic superiority over the petty caprices of transitory impulses. The imperative rationality of our highest ideals: this is what Kant's ethics points to, even though it does not present it with any adequacy. And, if the validity of this truth is recognized, Schopenhauer's contention that Kant's morality is a morality of masked egoism appears in a new light. Kant's 'categorical imperative' is egoistic, if one fails to appreciate the real significance of what Kant calls its 'autonomous' character. If one conceives it to be the command of a transcendent God, then obedience to it is nothing but a 'wise bargain,' and Schopenhauer's satire of such a 'du sollt' morality is well merited. But a realization of one's essential kinship with all reality must necessarily show that the true 'ought' is the expression of man's own truest self, in which he shares in the organic character of all experience. And, on that plane, which is the ideal plane of all ethical evaluation, narrow egoism and narrow altruism both lose their significance; for they both rest on a radically false dualism, to transcend which is the prime object of ethics as well as of all philosophy.

Ethics must study man, but it must recognize man for what he ideally is in his concrete totality, and not try to reduce the organic complexity of his nature to some one favorite formula.¹ Man is rational, and his consciousness of duty and universal law is essential to his moral life; but the consciousness of duty is not all. Sympathy is a prime factor in the evolution of man's social consciousness, and indispensable to any truly ethical development; but sympathy cannot exhaust the moral life. Egoism, the pursuit of one's own ends in the struggle for life, is also a normal tendency, but healthy man is no Juggernaut crushing everything and everybody in his path. Taken in isolation, out of their immanent relation within the organic unity of human nature, the stern sense of duty and the austere pursuit of virtue turn into the spiritless operation of an *a priori* rational machine; the glow of compassionate love, into the diseased fever of senti-

¹Cf. Jodl, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

mentality; the self-assertiveness of a normal human being, into the revolting brutality of a beast in human shape. Not by the suppression of any normal attribute or even appetite of human nature can the moral ideal be reached, but only by the progressive organization and mutual coöperation of all the elements that constitute human character. The growth of man's rationality must indicate with increasing distinctness the imperative demands of his own loftiest ideals; the development of the social consciousness, the emphasizing of man's intrinsic solidarity with his fellows, must constantly bring to clearer light the truth that one's own truest self-realization is inextricably bound up with the interests of the rest of mankind. The ethical saint who would recognize the concrete unity of all life, must not look for that unity in an undifferentiated mist of nothingness, but in an immanent system of organized diversities. And the concrete ideal of such a moral hero could by no means be embraced within the narrow confines of any one formula, be it virtue, or happiness, or sympathy, or self-assertion. All enlightened moral heroism must involve, not the ignoring of man's emotional nature, nor the brutal assertion of the will-to-live, nor yet its annihilation, but rather its ideal transfiguration into a motive power for the realization of man's real concrete self, for the transformation of the battle of discordant elements into an ever-growing harmony of mutual coöperation in the achievement of the concrete moral ideal in human society.

RADOSLAV A. TSANOFF.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY.